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AUTHOR Dann, Diane DuVal
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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of the 48 institutional members and 8 district offices of the League for Innovation in the Community College to assess the structures and scope of their marketing activities. Responses obtained from 75% of the colleges and 100% of the districts revealed the following: (1) the majority of the colleges were interested in marketing, with 33% possessing well-developed marketing functions; (2) 22% had an administrator with the word "marketing" in his/her title, and 53% had a marketing committee or taskforce; (3) the marketing activites most frequently undertaken were promotion, needs assessment studies, and development of a marketing plan; 4) 62% of the respondents wished to broaden their marketing efforts; and (5) schools involved in marketing were more likely to be engaged in planning activities supportive of the function. Based on study results it was recommended that colleges examine their expectations before beginning a marketing program; that individuals, rather than committees or taskforces be assigned to marketing; that the selection of a marketing person consider individual expertise as well as college emphases and needs; that neglected marketing elements, such as price structure (e.g., tuition, fees, and financial aid), be integrated into planning; and, finally, that colleges evaluate the adequacy of their research capabilities as related to marketing. (LL)

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The Status, Scope, and Structure of Marketing in a Selected Group of Community Colleges

(A Summary of Research Results)

by
Diane DuVal Dann

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c Diane Dann 1982
Eugene, Oregon 97405

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Diane DuVal Dann for the degree of Master of Science

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Title: THE STATUS, SCOPE, AND STRUCTURE OF MARKETING IN A SELECTED GROUP OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Approved: Galen R. Rarick

Galen R. Rarick

This study surveyed the 48 colleges that constitute the League for Innovation in the Community College to determine structure and scope of marketing activities. The response rate was 75 percent. One-third of respondents had relatively well-developed marketing functions. Another third was interested in expanding marketing activities. Active marketing efforts were concentrated in colleges that were well-financed, relatively small or especially concerned about enrollment. An analysis of marketing activities suggested that, in practice, marketing continues to be associated with promotion; however, answers to questions about future activities indicated that the colleges may be broadening their definition of marketing to include product development and distribution. Considerable ambivalence exists about including price as an issue of concern to marketing personnel. Findings also suggest that the colleges most "involved" in marketing employed more research and planning practices supportive of a marketing orientation, suggesting that, in general, among these colleges, marketing is more tha perficial label.

The Problem

Many colleges and universities, including many community colleges, have attempted to apply the marketing theories and techniques developed by business; however, it is not at all clear that these attempts have been successful.

In its purest form, marketing is an approach to planning that causes the organization to ask, What do our customers need? rather than, How do we sell them what we have? Marketing includes decisions about product development, price, distribution, and promotion.

The fundamental notion underlying marketing is appealing. Both Peter Drucker (1) and Philip Kotler (2) argue that if the marketing job is done properly--that is, if the product truly meets a need and is priced and placed properly--the product should sell itself. The problem for colleges and universities comes in the implementation and arises, this author believes, from two interrelated problems...disagreement about what is meant by the term "marketing" and difficulty in knowing where to place marketing on the organization chart.

Depending on the speaker and the context, the word "marketing" may be used to refer to any number of different things, including: 1) the way an organization views the world, i.e. as in marketing perspective or market orientation, 2) the process an organization goes through to make decisions regarding product development, price, distribution, and promotion, and 3) the activities of an organization's marketing person or department, who, depending on the organization, may oversee all or none of the above.

One source of confusion is that many of the organizations that make the most liberal use of the word "marketing" quite probably lack a true market orientation. Others use the word "marketing" primarily to describe the selling of the product. A survey of college admissions officers published in 1978 revealed that 90 percent believed marketing to be synonymous with promotion (3).

Gradually, the literature is beginning to reflect a broader view of marketing, but this creates a new problem. If a college views marketing as one element of the marketing mix, such as promotion or recruitment, the college can assign marketing to the person responsible for promotion or recruitment; but, if the college views marketing as

the developing of the total marketing offering--i.e. what it will offer, when and where, and how much tuition it will charge--the placement of responsibility for marketing becomes much more difficult.

Description of Research and Survey Population

This research was designed to look at this phenomenon as it relates to community colleges--to determine if they are interested in marketing, what they actually do under the marketing label, and whether they have encountered difficulties.

Community colleges appear ideal for such a study. Community colleges pride themselves on being responsive and market-oriented. Most serve a relatively small, geographically-defined population, and most rely on that same population for at least part of their funding. It would seem that a community colleges that misses the mark--that doesn't respond to the needs of its constituents--would soon know it.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions: What kinds of schools are most likely to be involved in marketing? Have these schools assigned responsibility for marketing to a particular person or group? What activities are included under the marketing label and what does this tell us about how these colleges are defining marketing? And, finally, are the schools that are doing the most under the marketing label more or less likely to have planning practices supportive of a marketing orientation?

The survey was conducted by mail during the summer of 1982. The questionnaire was sent to the colleges that are members of the League for Innovation in the Community College. At the time this research was conducted, the League included 17 members. Nine of these were single colleges, and eight are college districts with more than one college. The 48 colleges that make up these 17 districts were surveyed. An additional questionnaire was prepared for the eight district offices.

Usable, completed questionnaires were received from 75 percent of the colleges and 100 percent of the district offices. These respondents represented 10 states. The majority of the colleges, 58 percent, had enrollments of from 10,000 to 30,000, while the others were divided nearly equally between the "less than 10,000" and "more than 30,000" categories. On average, respondents described themselves as experiencing some, but not severe, enrollment problems and moderate competition. They

described their financial situations as mixed, but worsening.

Research Results

Interest in Marketing The results of this study show that the majority of these community colleges are interested in marketing. One-third had relatively well-developed marketing functions as evidenced by the existence of a marketing person and a written marketing plan or a marketing committee and a written marketing plan. Sixty-two percent of the colleges were interested in doing more with marketing than they were doing at the time of the survey.

Colleges that were interested in marketing were asked if they had experienced any philosophical or organizational problems in attempting to organize a marketing effort. Forty-eight percent said "yes." These difficulties included internal and external resistance to the word marketing and problems with organization and funding.

Active marketing efforts were concentrated in colleges that were well-financed, relatively small or especially concerned about enrollment. In fact, the colleges that reported they had adequate funding were three times more likely than the other schools to be involved in marketing and more likely to be interested in doing more with marketing in the future.

Structure of Marketing Twenty-two percent of the schools reported having an administrator with the word "marketing" in his or her title or job description; 53 percent had a marketing committee or task force. Thirty-nine percent of the colleges had written marketing plans.

As the literature suggests, marketing responsibilities had been assigned to people from diverse places on the organization chart, including the public information and admissions offices and the offices of the president, the dean of instruction, and the dean of students.

The following table shows the incidence of marketing activity on a school-by-school basis. Although only 22 percent of the schools had a marketing person, all of the schools that reported having a marketing person also had a marketing committee and a written marketing plan.

PATTERNS OF MARKETING ELEMENTS
(N = 36)

	N	%
Person, committee, and plan	8	22
Committee only	7	19
Committee and plan only	4	11
Plan only	2	6
None of the three	15	42

Scope of Marketing To determine how the colleges were defining the marketing task as evidenced by the scope of activities assigned the marketing person or committee, the author developed a list of nine activities that a marketing person or group at a community college could/should be involved in. This list included: institutional long-range planning; community needs assessment studies; other marketing research; participation in decision-making about product (educational programs and student services), price (tuition), distribution (major changes in when/where college programs are offered), and promotion; and development of a marketing plan.

The results of this research tend to support the argument that disproportionate emphasis is placed on promotion. The three activities most frequently mentioned for both the marketing persons and the marketing committees were promotion, community needs assessment studies, and development of a marketing plan; however, the results of this study also reveal that the scope of the marketing task may vary depending on who is given responsibility for marketing and whether marketing is assigned to a person or a committee. In general, among this group of colleges, marketing people played a role in a much wider range of marketing activities than did marketing committees. Furthermore, although the numbers are too small to be very conclusive, it appears that the admissions and instructional people assigned to marketing were involved in a larger number of the specified marketing activities than were the other people assigned to marketing.

The Changing Scope and Structure of Marketing The data about existing marketing efforts show that a minority of colleges are actively

involved in marketing and that the scope of marketing activity is relatively narrow, but, when respondents were asked to look ahead to the future, they saw a growth in marketing activity and a broadening of the definition of marketing. Sixty-two percent of the colleges were interested in doing more with marketing than they were at the time of the study. Just over half of those said the most appropriate "next step" for their colleges would be to assign someone responsibility for marketing. Most of these would assign marketing responsibility to someone already within the college administration. A few would hire a marketing person from outside the college. Twenty-eight percent selected as their next step the formation of a marketing committee or task force. Eleven percent would hire marketing specialists as needed. None said they would hire specialists on retainer.

When asked what these people and groups might do, the majority of respondents broadened their list of activities to include eight of the nine specified marketing activities, including decisions about educational programming and the timing/location of programs and services. Only one element of the marketing mix--price (the setting of tuition and fees) -- failed to be mentioned by the majority.

The proposition that the definition of marketing may be broadening receives further support from responses to another series of questions in which respondents were asked if their colleges conducted research supportive of the four elements in the marketing mix, and whether, if they did not, they would find such research valuable. All of the colleges that were interested in marketing and that did not offer research to program (product) planners said such assistance would be "very" valuable. Similarly, most of the colleges that had not done formal research to determine the optimal timing and location (distribution) of programs and services or the effectiveness of publications (promotion) said these kinds of research would be valuable. By contrast, less than half thought research could be helpful in making decisions about tuition and fees (price).

Marketing: Semantics or Substance The study also attempted to determine if the schools that were making the most liberal use of the term "marketing" were any more or less likely to have planning practices supportive of a comprehensive marketing effort. The literature would

lead one to suspect that in many cases marketing is an add-on, that schools adopt the marketing label without adopting the planning activities fundamental to a sound market orientation.

To examine this question, the author, drawing on the literature (particularly Kotler), developed a list of activities/behaviors essential to an atmosphere supportive of marketing. (See Table, "Involvement in Marketing Support Activities.") So that this information could be used for the purposes of a comparison, a point scale was developed and each college was rated on this scale. The maximum points possible was 16. Final scores ranged from 2 to 13.

It was found that colleges that were doing the most under the marketing label had an average score of 9.8, while the schools that were not involved in marketing had an average score of 8.2. While this is not a large difference, it does suggest that the schools that were involved in marketing were on average engaged in a few more of the planning activities supportive of marketing. This finding received further support from the fact that 75 percent of the schools involved in marketing had planning scores at or above the median score of nine, while 50 percent of the schools that were not involved in marketing had scores at or above the median score of nine.

Marketing and the College District Four of the eight college districts had a person assigned to marketing at the district level. Two of these had marketing committees. The other four districts reported no formal marketing activity at the district level. Here again, the emphasis in activity was on community needs assessment studies, promotion, development of a marketing plan, plus long-range planning.

Recommendations to Colleges

Based on the findings in this study, coupled with the findings of other researchers, the author makes the following recommendations to community colleges that are interested in expanding their use of marketing:

1. That colleges carefully examine their expectations regarding marketing before they embark on a program of marketing. Do they want to incorporate marketing into their overall planning activities or are

INVOLVEMENT IN MARKETING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES
(N = 36)

Points	Activity	N	%
1.	Written mission statement	34	94
2.	that is used to direct planning	15	42
3.	Written goals and objectives	28	78
4.	An administrative council or other top level planning group that addresses all four elements in the marketing mix	13	36
5.	Research capability described as centralized and available or decentralized and effective	14	39
6.	Community needs assessment study in past three years	22	61
7.	Clear idea of how community perceives college	11	31
	Routinely gathering demographic information on:		
8.	vocational students	35	97
9.	college transfer students	34	94
10.	community education students	18	50
	Follow-up studies of:		
11.	early leavers	18	50
12.	graduates	19	53
	History of doing research to support decisions in each element of the marketing mix:		
13.	programming	22	61
14.	when/where programs/services offered	17	47
15.	promotion	12	33
16.	tuition/fees	4	11

they primarily interested in enhancing recruitment activities?

2. That colleges that are interested in adopting a more comprehensive view of marketing give specific thought to the various possible ways to structure marketing and to the organizational placement of responsibility for marketing. The results of this study suggest that the assignment of marketing to an individual may better facilitate the advancement of marketing than the assignment of marketing to a committee, while the addition of a marketing committee can add needed expertise and input.

3. That the selection of a marketing person take into consideration both the expertise and areas of authority of that individual and the aspects of marketing the college wishes to emphasize. In this small group of community colleges, admissions officers and instructional deans appeared to be involved in a wider range of identified marketing activities than were the others assigned to marketing.

4. That colleges that wish to adopt a more comprehensive view of marketing attempt to integrate into their marketing planning the more neglected elements in the marketing mix, and, in particular, that they give more thought to price structure (tuition, fees, financial aid) as part of the marketing mix.

5. That colleges interested in a comprehensive view of marketing evaluate the adequacy of their research capability as it relates to needs assessment, gathering data from students and graduates, and decisions regarding the four elements of the marketing mix.

A partial bibliography

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ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
8118 Math-Sciences Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

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